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Faint Chords

Poems

By

GEORGE SCHEFTEL

Faint Chords

Poems

By
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INTRODUCTORY.

At the request of several of my friends, I have compiled in this humble volume a few of my poems, the majority of which have appeared in the Daily People during the last two or three years.

It is with a beating heart, that I launch this work into the sea of Literature, already so overcrowded, but yet with the hope that my little bark will not be wrecked upon the reefs of criticism or the shoals of indifference.

I hereby wish to acknowledge my debt to comrade Solon De Leon, who, while Literary Editor of the Daily People, has helped me greatly with his kind advice, and also my sincere gratitude to many more of my friends who have made the publication of this volume possible.

G. S.

Brooklyn, N. Y., August, 1913.



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FAINT CHORDS

TO MY MUSE.

Inspiring Muse, spread thy ethereal wings
And as thou passest, rustle thru the strings
Of my faint lyre, for I would fain
That thou inspire my sad refrain.
Com'st darkling?...As I gaze above,
Upon the heavenly blue, where stars their love
Are whispering to the suffering world;
I see thee faintly, with thy wings unfurled.

What can'st thou do among the silent skies,
Where swims the melancholy moon alone
And sighs forsaken, 'midst the crowded stars?...
Here man's conceiving inspiration dies
And he becomes a brother to a stone,
Lost in the turmoil of a world of lies.
O, let us rouse him with our melodies
Of fiery music full of flaming bars!

Thou'rt here at last! My sensual lips proclaim
Thy kiss upon them, and my teeming brain
Begins to form the framework of my lay,—
But holds thee feebly . . . stay, O, stay
Until my lyre has sung its feeble song;—
And do not fly away and roam among
The planets, where thy form I spied,
Invoking thee to come...and thou replied.

FAINT CHORDS

Ah, how my soul pines for a breath of air:
To live, to love, create and to advance.
To be with thee, to kiss thy lips fore'er
And to devour with insatiate eyes thy glance...
Thou canst not stay, thou exile of the day,
The day-gates close against thy beating wings,
With yearning eye, I watch thee fly away...
But hark! My lyre sings! My lyre sings...

THE DREAMER.

Yes, I can dream! My fancy, taking flight
Beyond the clouds, beyond the moon's sad beams,
Can wander far away beyond the night
With all the world into the land of dreams;
And conjure forth such pleasant harmonies,
That the surrounding clamor faints away
Bewitched; and million suns in radiant skies
Upon the universe begin to play.
Yes, I can dream and happy is my soul;
The things I vision forth are happy things;
So wondrous happy and so free from dole,
That in ecstasy my spirit sings,—

But, Oh what pain! What sadness and what pain,
When stern Reality comes back again.

FAINT CHORDS

OF HER.

She's gone away from me
 Ne'er to return;
Ne'er her again to see
 Now must I learn.
Shattered her hope of life,
 Broken her heart;
Bended by bitter strife;—
 We had to part.
Life's bitter suffering,
 Long she withstood,
She brought her offering—
 None understood . . .
Such is the recompense
 For her bright mind:
So much the world is dense,
 So is it blind.
Gone now, forever gone,
 Ne'er to return;
I am a lonely one...
 Ah, Life is stern!

THE FLOWERS.

First came the spring and the flowers were born;
 All thru the summer they bloomed;
When autumn arrived, it found them worn
 And waiting for winter, to die;—
But deep in the ground, their seeds abound,
 Awaiting a smiling sky.

FAINT CHORDS

SPRING.

The feverish, lotus-laden breath of Spring,
Now warm, now cooled by breezes from the sea,
Comes, swiftly borne upon the sun's warm wing,
And wafts its newborn longings unto me.

A drowsy feeling presses on my brain,
And hateful turns the city's life and scent;
Air wants my breast, some shady vale to gain,
Room to expand, and breathe in full content.

But ah, this happiness is not for me,
For life is formed in quite a different way;
And tho my soul is pining to be free,
In these confines I still am doomed to stay.

WINTER.

The snow fell, fell, fell,
The white flaky snow fell;
Oh how chilling it fell,
On the hill and dell,
How it sparkled all over the grass.

B-r-r-r—How 'tis frosty cold!
Pshew—How the wind is cold!
And the frost, and the wind
As it wailed behind,
Froze the mere into opaque glass.

FAINT CHORDS

Glance at the trees,
They were once green trees;
 What a glorious sight,
They are all turned white;—
 Each branch in a glove of snow.

Look up at the sky,
At the white, sifting sky,
 How the snow-moths dance,
How they play and prance,
 Unaware of their end below.

RAIN DROPS.

Little rain drops jumping
 At my window pane,
Drumming, beating, thumping,
 Dancing like insane.

Seem to be a-telling
 Of this wordly strife,
Of the strong, impelling
 Forces in our life.

Little raindrops creeping
 Down my window pane
As if they are weeping
 Tears of deepest pain;

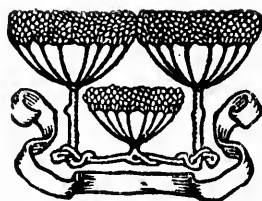
FAINT CHORDS

Still a-flowing, flowing,
Catching other drops,
And in volume growing,
Flowing without stops;

Seem to tell a story
Full of pain and woe,
Full of sadness, worry,
That still grow and grow.

Still, they are inspiring
In their ceaseless noise,
In their tireless firing,
In their earnest voice.

For they seem a-telling
Of a patient mind
With a voice compelling,
Hamm'ring at the blind.



FAINT CHORDS

THE OAK.

There stands the tall, bare oak. His withered arms
Are stretched to heaven in resigned despair;
All vanished are his greenish, youthful charms,
And left him standing like an outcast there.

A tumor 'round his trunk, a fungus growth,
Had like a spider sucked his very sap;
Embracing him in treacherous arms and loth,
To liberate the victim in its trap.

Around him lay the prints of Autumn's trail:
Leaves fallen, trees uprooted, lying low;
As if there passed a great destructive gale,
And dealt to every twig its mortal blow.

Poor tree, surrounded by such havoc great,
And dying slowly, food for parasite;
Ah, that I could relieve thee from thy fate,
And bring thy long-lost beauties into sight!



FAINT CHORDS

AT AN ORGAN RECITAL.

Sad is my heart. Enraptured organist,
Play once again that melody divine!
My soul can scarce its plaintive tune resist
And pours hot tears upon your mystic shrine.

O, what an outpour in one melody!
As if the whole world yearned in that one song;
My heart seems rent as if in sympathy,
Which does its yearning and its pain prolong.

But still I long for it, and ask you play,
It chimes right in with my poor troubled heart;
It drives all else but mine own pain away;
For all its pain becomes of mine a part.

SONGS.

When'er I hear those sweet, melodious songs,
That thrill the heart and water eyes with joy,
A gladness comes for which my spirit longs
And makes me feel again—a boy.

Enchanted, as a prince in fairy tales,
I drink the heavenly music with my soul;
That spreading wings around and 'round me sails,
In chains of bliss enthralls my spirit whole.

FAINT CHORDS

LINES TO MUSIC.

Sweet music gently sails into my ear,
Like some fair vessel urged by the wind
Across the waters to its haven near,
Bringing glad news and driving cares behind.
O sounds, that soothe the soul, coax pain away,
And witch around a paradise of bliss,
Keep on a-floating on your wavy way!
Sweep cares and sorrows that have made me grey,
And feelings of an empty void, away!
Make me forget what my poor heart doth miss:
The love, the kindness, gentleness of man,
With Poverty away, beneath a ban.
Fill up the aching, longing heart, that craves,
Tho disappointment throw a sure-eyed sling,
To do, to help, some happiness to bring
To the poor fools that know not they are slaves.
Keep on! My ears are thirsty; every sound
Seems like a treasure that is newly found.

TO LYDIA.

To thee, O Lydia, whose very name
Sounds like the music of an angel's lyre;
To thee, who kindled in my heart a flame,
As constant, as the bright celestial fire
That virgins burned in temples to their gods;
To thee I write this song; to thee who art
The sweetest of thy sex; and when I see
Thy lovely hand, my heart's in ecstasy,
My breath is held as 'twixt two iron rods;
And from thy tapering fingers ne'er my eyes depart.

FAINT CHORDS

TO DRESDEN.

When first I gazed into thy wondrous eyes,
Where mischief lurks and glances from beneath
Those long dark lashes of most beauteous size;
When first I gazed with wonder-charmed breath
At thy voluptuous beauty, sweetest maid;
Thou did'st remind me of a gypsy queen,
Whom once on motion pictures I have seen,
Where she the part of heart-breaker had played;
And Cupid straightway smote my beating heart
And sent the amorous flushes to my brow
With all the force of his enchanted dart.
And as I sit and think about thee now,
I wonder, as I tremble with delight:
Is this what poets name, love at first sight?

TO R——

Oft, as I sit alone and dream
Of those two dark and longing eyes,
Into my heart to creep they seem
And take it wholly by surprise.
Oft, as I think of that sweet face,
With its bewitching, dimpled smile,
And of those movements full of grace,
Like Cleopatra's of the Nile;
My heart begins to doubt and sigh,...
I love; but is my love returned?
O, you sweet beauty, tell, am I
To live and hope, my love's not spurned?

TO S——

Remember once I heard you play?

Those sweet and soft enchanted strains

Have lighted up my heart, as rays

Light up the night for coming day;

My heart awoke in ecstasy!! . . .

And then the music died away...

But still that wondrous fantasy

Clings to my mem'ry to this day.

TO ELIZABETH.

O, sister mine, thy tender heart

Is like the moonlight on the sea:

Soft, mellow, sensitive and free,

Thy tender heart.

O, sister mine, thy loving eyes

Are gentle, wistful, like a dove's;

O, how they mirror all thy love;

Thy gentle eyes.

O, sister mine, thy mellow voice

Is like an organ's soothing sound:

It drives my trouble to the ground;

Thy mellow voice.

FAINT CHORDS

THE PALISADES.

Beneath the sombre, silent Palisades,
That loom like giants on the rocky shore;
Upon a hillock, in their gloomy shades,
We built a tent to rest till night were o'er.

They sleep. I can not! Sleep seems far away.
The joy of life to ecstasy has grown;
And night seemed only to succeed the day
For me to sit in silence and alone.

Alone? No, not alone! All lives around:
The noises in the grass, the glimm'ring lights,
And many a strange and oft-repeated sound
With now and then a "caw" "caw" from the heights;

And like a fairy-flute, unseen, tho near,
The answering warble of another bird,
Whose music sounds the sweetest to my ear—
So very, very seldom is it heard.

And here I sit upon my moored boat,
Beneath the vast and silent starry sky,
And watch the moon in peace and silence float
Upon her undisputed course on high.

And there upon the flowing waters deep
She throws reflections of her swaying light
And watches little waves that playing leap
Their tiny way to Liliputian height.

FAINT CHORDS

The boat is gently swaying to and fro,
And hugging tenderly the rugged rocks.
A quiet joy upon me seems to grow;—
The boat a cradle seems, which Nature rocks.

There is a spot some hundred yards away,
Where a rushing stream comes running down the
hill—

Thru darkness, rocks and trees, I felt my way
To drink the water of the pure clear rill.

And then returned again to watch and wait
And see the moon her patient path improve,
And marvel at mankind for all its hate,
When Nature breathes of softness and of love.

O, Solitude! With Nature and with Thee,
And not a mortal to disturb my muse;
Forgetting cares and sorrows that were free
Thruout my heart their aching to diffuse,—
Ah, that is bliss, that rarely is my lot.
Ah, if I could, I'd ne'er forsake this spot.



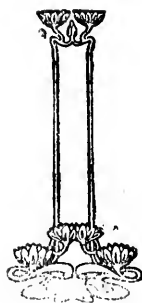
FAINT CHORDS

ABANDON.

I live in a land of bliss!
A land where Cupid reigns;
A land where his shaft is blown by a waft
Of the Zephyr's loving kiss.
And all the hearts and all the veins
Pulsate and beat with bliss.

Palaces great are there!
Gardens and fountains fair!
Forests of faun and the golden dawn,
And the perfume of the air;
But my delight are the eyes so bright
Of my loving lady fair.

I live in a land of bliss!
My life is one great delight!
My darling fair with charms so rare,
Makes the world look happy and bright.
And I have no care for her love is there;—
I live in a land of bliss!



FAINT CHORDS

THE POET.

A poet he, who feels a pang of pain
For every suff'ring creature in the world;
A poet he, who feels in every vein
An impulse sending him to fight the wrong
At which his voice and pen are ever hurled
In sorrowful or stormy angry song.

A poet he, whom neither fame nor power
Can lure away from his uprighteous road;
Whose mind and heart as like an iron tower
Resist attack of all alluring lust.
Who'll fight for truth, nor fear a chide or goad,
Until his body goes again to dust.

THE CONQUEROR.

Look yonder, son, with what grandeur the sun
Mounts yon gray steed upon the heaven's bend;
See how he throws his lances, one by one,
And conquers sleeping earth, from end to end.

And watch the shadows vanish, one by one,
As pierced thru they sneak away in fear:—
And still he rides,—the glorious champion,—
While all the world reflects his bright career,

FAINT CHORDS

ODE TO PEN AND PAPER.

When sitting all alone at night,
With gloomy, cloudy thoughts devouring
All youthful visions light and bright,—
My sorrows must my pen be pouring
To relieve the aching of the heart;
As if the paper tears receiving,
Keeps them—perhaps a little part
Of truth, to all my brothers, giving.

O precious pen! Without thy body long,
Without thy point fed by the flowing fluid;
How could a poet sing his light or tearful song
And millions sip the sweetness of his flute!

O paper white! Thou recorder of thought!
Thou memory of the world! So many
Deeds upon thy surface smooth are wrought,
And thou complaining not, never protesting any.

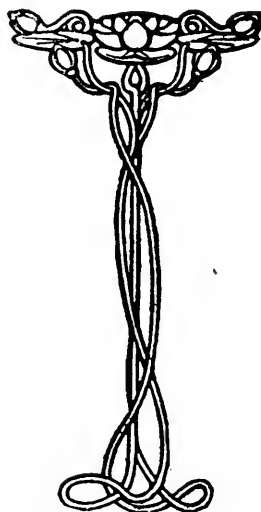
Thou bendest not beneath Titanic weights
Of battles and of woes retold art not aware
Of history yet untold that thee awaits:
Of strife, of war, of worry and of care.

Thou art the whole wide world in pantomime,
Thou spreadest evil, it is very true;
But all the truths that thru your pages shine,
Will in the end our life with bliss bestrew.

FAINT CHORDS

Ah! That I could like thee, look blandly at the world,
Smiling at all its struggles and its strife.
Unmindful of its lusts, injustice that is hurled
At those who are unfortunate in this life,
Feeling how small and base those are
Who take advantage, for their selfish use,
Who strip the beggar of his rags, and mar
Our lives, for power and rags of better hues.

Alas! I can not! Every wrong that's done
Stabs like a knife each vital, aching part.
O, brother love, O, love where art thou gone?
Why have you not enfruited every heart?



FAINT CHORDS

OUTCAST.

Huddled up, in shabby clothes,
Thin from want and cold,
Stood a woman—like a rose
Stemless, worn and old.

On a corner—wind was blowing—
Stood she in despair;
With large, pleading eyes, not knowing
Whether she should dare.

Not a passer-by was stopping;
She had grown too old.
Only looks of scorn were dropping,
Looks so heartless, cold.

Yes! When she was young and pretty,
All would turn her way.
All would call her dainty, witty,
Buy her night and day.

Now, by all she is forsaken,
Hunger grips her tight,
She would bless a soul if taken,
Kept for over night.

She would not want any payment,
Just some bread and tea.
Better than to walk the pavement—
She'd so thankful be.

FAINT CHORDS

Reader, now I know, you're thinking,
 "That is but her due!
'Tis the consequence of drinking,
 Of her business, too!"

Ah, but you are wrong, my reader,
 She is not to blame.
'Twas your system drove her thither,
 System full of shame!

Want and hunger, baby crying,
 That's the reason why,
Rather than to see it dying,
 She let honor die.

Noble was her deed, dear reader
 Noble was her shame!
They are thru, no more they need her,
 She bears all the blame.

My heart boils to see the power
 Which on such life thrives,
Safely guarded in its tower
 By your foolish lives.

FAINT CHORDS

THE SICKLY YOUTH.

As like a Turkish maid, who doffs her veil
Her lover's kisses with her lips to hail,
Fair morn unveiled herself before my eyes,
As she came smiling from the azure skies.
And I was winding on my weary way
To toil in factory all the livelong day.

There grazed the cows upon the grassy field
And munched the fresh, the sweet, and juicy yield;
While some were lounging on a plashy place,
Or stood around with noses face to face.
And I was plodding on my toilsome way
To moil and grind my sickly youth away.

The sea was near. O, how I longed to roam
Its vast domains, upon its billowy foam.
O, how I wished to man some sailing boat
And thru its waves with rested oars to float!
But want kept urging me upon my way
And tore perforce my longing look away.

The flowers on the way were sweet to smell,
But at my touch their glistening tear-drops fell;
I wished to pick a few to take with me,
But pity smote my hand reproachfully.

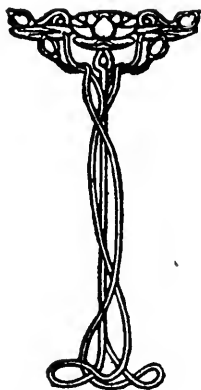
At last the factory gates loomed tall and grim,
Just like a prison frowning cold and dim.
And there all day, from early morn till night,
Like a machine, I worked with all my might.

FAINT CHORDS

Slowly the sun sank in its golden hues,
Sweet fragrance did the evening air diffuse,
Tired out and hungry, head upon my chest,
I dragged on home to eat my meal and rest.

O, God! Will these my years drag on like this,
Without a joy, without a single bliss?
Will I forever slave and slowly die
With longings unfulfilled; forever ply

The wheel of fortune for somebody else,
And never be rewarded for my work?
O, god! 'Tis better then to ring the bells
And start to dig the earth with burial dirk.



FAINT CHORDS

THE WAIF.

On the street a boy was standing;
Little, thin and poorly clad;
In his tiny hands were papers,
And his face looked wan and sad.

And his little back was crooked;
And the cold went thru and thru.
And the tears still trickled, trickled,
Down his cheeks so cold and blue.

And his little body shivered;
But he bravely wiped each eye,
Stamped his feet, and shouted "Extra!"
Faintly, at the passer-by.

And the men and women passing,
In their hurry, glanced and went;
But a few, who felt some pity,
Bought a paper for a cent.

But the most paid no attention
To the voice so frail and thin,
Scarcely heard above the tramping,
And the city's usual din.

What cared they for others' children?
What cared they for others' grief?
What cared they for others' mothers,
Who were sick without relief?

FAINT CHORDS

Such sad sights to them were common,
They had seen the like before;
They had steeled their hearts to sorrow,
Did not wonder any more.

But I saw a young man watching,
Poorly dressed, with yearning eye;
And I saw him leaving, heaving
Many a helpless, tearful sigh.



FAINT CHORDS

STANZAS.

So monot'nous is the life
That we live here every day,
I am weary of the strife
And I fain would fly away.

Work from morning until eve,
But a trifle leisure time;
O, how I would like to leave
Like a little bird, this clime.

I would fly so far away,
That my way, I'd, back forget.
O, forever I would stay
There away and never fret.

O, just for a little tent
In the middle of a wood,
With the green limbs downward bent
With their shades so wondrous good.

O, for grass and leaves and flowers
And the singing of the birds!
O, for golden, golden hours,
Watching happy grazing herds.

O, just for the little bees,
Buzzing, flying all around;
And up high among the trees,
Little bushy squirrel's bound.

THRU THE EAST SIDE.

'Twas drowsy drizzling drearily,
 As I was walking wearily
 Thru streets unclean, midst pools of rain.
 Sad was my heart and gloomily
 Sad thoughts were dragging thru my brain;
 Were dragging thru my weary brain.

The buildings, high in a foggy sky,
 Dreary abodes of misery,
 Stood looming all along the way,
 Seeming the weather to defy;
 But cold and uninviting gray,
 Of cold and uninviting gray.

'Twas chilly to the very bone;
 And all the roadways seemed to groan
 Beneath the roll of passing wheels,
 Splashing dirt from crevice and stone
 Upon the passer-by, who heels . . .
 His way across the roadway heels.

And in the gutters, garbage heaps . . .
 On which the little sparrow leaps;
 Or tramping, sickly, wretched dog,
 All shrinking, at the passer weeps;
 Then follows thru the murky fog,
 Follows, till chased, thru the murky fog.

FAINT CHORDS

And pushcart venders with their ware,
Shouting their goods as cheap and rare ;
And peddlers swarming everywhere,
Covered with rags, that fairly glare ;
With haggard faces and grayish hair.
With haggard faces and grayish hair.

I passed a beggar, 'gainst a wall,
White-bearded, blind, of stature small,
Standing with grayish, outstretched palm ;
Shivering, almost ready to fall ;
And his face in a grimace of deepest qualm.
His haggard face in a grimace of qualm.

Ah, what a yearning thru my heart,
Passed with a longing pain and smart—
A mad desire to be away ;
From all this misery to part ;
And to a better land to stray.
O, to a better land to stray.

But then a better thought : to fight,
To work, to help to spread the light,
To banish misery from the earth
And make things look joyous and bright
And hopeful, and make living worth,
And make the earthly living worth.

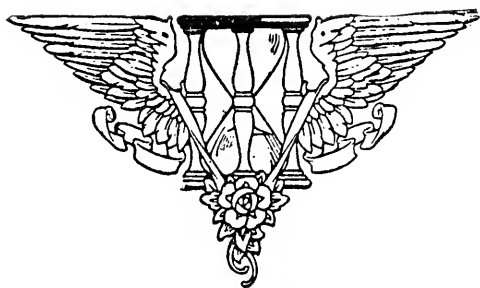
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Slowly, the fog began to clear,
The rain had stopped, and heav'n seemed near.

The autumn sun then showed its face,
Sad thoughts began to disappear

And bright ones vaulted in their place,

And bright ones vaulted in their place.



FREEDOM.

Each human heart to happiness aspires;
Each soul for beauty seeks, exalting self thereby;
For beauty, beauty breeds and high desires,
And happiness at beauty's door does lie.

But not all hearts have strong will in possession,
Nor every soul is free to do its will;
Succumbing to the fine and vain oppression,
Of fiendish hearts, whose souls are hardened still.

Should this be so? Not in a thousand ages!
Rend all the chains that hold you fast to dark!
For every soul, that in this strife engages,
Must be as free as the enchanting lark.

TRAVELING UPHILL.

Whatever be our earthly lot;
Whether a good one, whether not,
This truth should never be forgot:
We're traveling uphill.

We might be low as ships that sank
Or high upon a river's bank,
Poor, or have millions in the bank,—
The world grows better, still.

For knowledge pushes all ahead;
Our minds, the Truth, are grasping fast,
The Tyrant's restless in his bed;
He knows that he must go at last.

A BIRD AND A FLOWER.

"O, little flower, so frail and tender,
 You can not brave the storms alone ;
 The pine is strong and yet winds bend her,
 And even oaks in terror moan.
 O, let me pluck you little flower,
 And let me shield you in my nest ;
 And every little, fleeting hour
 With kisses press you to my breast."
 "O, pluck me not for I am slender,
 And in my bower I feel best ;
 Your kisses—, O, they may be tender,
 But I will wither in your nest.
 The winds are strong, the storms are sweeping,
 But I will brave them, never fear,
 For watch, how fast the sun is creeping
 To give me life and strength and cheer.
 O, fly away you little starling
 And be as happy as you please ;
 And every morning, O, my darling,
 I'll watch you singing in the trees."

FAINT CHORDS

CHAINED BY GREED.

Why is this world so full of woe,
Of misery and strife?
It's sorrows like a Gulf stream flow
Thru zigzagged seas of life!

Because it's chained by heartless greed,
By selfish use of power.
Because true love, that godly seed
Which earth from sorrow could have freed,
Has not bloomed forth in flower.

THE WIND'S MISSION.

The eyes of heaven are no more brightly peeping
Thru the heavy seas of dark and billowy clouds;
Perhaps it's they who are in torrents weeping
Because they can't see thru their heavy shrouds.

Weep not, O stars! If it be you who're weeping,
Shed not your tears upon the dormant earth!
Unconscious, in oblivion deep, 'tis sleeping
With hunger, strife and slav'ry 'round its girth.

Weep not because the clouds obstruct your vision,
Weep not; the mighty wind is on his way.
He comes resistless, with his ardent mission
To sweep the darkness and the clouds away.

LIFE.

Life is nothing but a struggle
To uplift the human mind,
To ennoble human hearts,
And from hard to make them kind.

'Tis a struggle full of danger,
Full of manly sacrifice;
'Tis most hard to be accomplished,
Being sheathed by many a vice.

Hunger stops its way a little,
But takes leadership again;
Darkness hinders its advancement,
But the light shines brighter then.

And in spite of all the darkness,
And in spite of vice and sin,
And in spite of hunger banging
At the door we have within;

Life will reach its destined pasture
And will graze till all is gone.
Then again resume its travel,
Till a higher goal is won.

FAINT CHORDS

SARCASTIC ANSWER.

O, how I'd like to wander to some quiet nook,
Far, far away from this uproarious world;
Alone with birds to dwell and hear them sing
Their happy concerts on the boughs of leafy trees;
Or with the insects lie upon the teeming grass
And listen to their gossip and their noise,
Or gather flow'rs and draw their perfume in
Deep, like a long draught of sparkling ruby wine.
Then sit me down beneath a flow'ry summer bower
And write, my pen with fluid of Nature filled,
Outpouring all my singing heart upon
The kind old album's pages hungry for my verse.

But hark! There comes a voice sarcastic, from the
depths:

“No, dreamer, thou canst not!”

Or I would like to go to some far beach and lie
Upon the sand and watch the curved line
On which the swelling sails, as white as gulls,
Are swiftly passing one by one to distant lands.
Or draw upon the sand fantastic castles, knights,
And dream, with open eyes, of tournaments
With ladies fair, who golden crowns bestow . . .
Then with a sweeping hand, like Destiny, destroy
My own creations. And then, run into the sea
With outstretched hands and swim far, far away,
Where boats are drifting idly to and fro . . .
And float beneath the azure skies and smiling sun.

But hark! There comes a voice sarcastic, from the
depths:

"No, dreamer, thou canst not."

O, how I pine to run away from this great city
With all its bridges curving thru the air,
With all its buildings tall and chimneys high,
With all its bellied gas-tanks and its myriad lights,
With all its noise and hurry on its teeming streets,
With all its petty, foolish tasks and cares.
Where children lose their souls 'midst prison walls
And pine away for want of food and play;
Where there is much for all, yet Hunger tramps the
streets,

And life is burdensome and full of woe.
I wonder sometimes why almighty God
Had taken pains to build this Universe, giving
Us aspirations to a higher life and then—
To see them all destroyed by human weakness,
As, like a vessel built as high as Babel's tower,
Sailing with pride upon the angry sea,
Breasing the waves with joyous ecstasy,
By giant icebergs sunken to the depths below.
O, how I hate this strife, and death meseems
A doubly welcome friend to put me at my ease . . .

But hark! There comes a voice, sarcastic, from the
depths:

"No fool! You yearn to live and fight."

THE BLUFF-BIRD*

In the southern wilds of Georgia
Dwells a curious looking bird;
'Tis a mixture of a parrot
And an owl—as I have heard.
For it sees in darkness only,
And it blabbers day and night—
And repeats just like a lesson:—
“Right is wrong and wrong is right!”

Once it had a few adherents—
Such as ravens, bats and jays,
Who did listen to its falsehoods,
Told in hundred diff'rent ways.
And it liked to tell them stories
Of its gentle, loving wife,
Of its wisdom and its glory,
And its never ceasing strife.

But, it's only an'mal nature,—
Bats and jays get tired too
Of a ceaseless, prattling Bluff bird—
So they spread their wings and flew.
“Holy Moses! I'm in badly!
What the Dickens should be done?”
Croaked the Bluff bird almost madly,
As its tears began to run.

“Who will listen to my stories,
Now that all my friends are gone?—

To my pretty little speeches,
 That their praise so often won?"
 So it closed its eyes in sorrow
 And it thought of what to do;
 And at last with owlsh wisdom
 Found a plan to help it thru.

At the same time thought, quite shrewdly,
 "Those rich, mighty birds will say,
 That I'm helping them immensely,—
 And of course I'll get some pay."
 So it opened up its crooked,
 Little beak, and loudly croaked:
 "Listen, all you birds of wisdom!
 These words ne'er will be revoked.

"Far away, beyond this forest,
 Where the light shines very bright,
 (So we cannot well reside there,
 For we straightway lose our sight)
 Lives an eagle, claiming power
 That nobody can withstand.
 Well, I challenge him to fight me—
 Let him come and feel my hand!"

Every eye was strained in wonder,
 As they gazed upon that bird;
 For so bold a challenge issued,
 Had by them been seldom heard.
 And the news spread just like wild-fire,
 Till it reached the eagle's nest—

FAINT CHORDS

He arose and cried in anger:

“I will fly and kill that pest!”

He arrived. But lo! The Bluff bird,

Fearing for its worthless life,

Like a coward got so frightened,

That it hid behind its wife.

But the eagle fished the worthy

Out, and quickly stilled its dope—

Well, the Bluff bird will be silent

For a while at least, we hope.

*NOTE: This poem was written after Thomas Watson refused to accept Comrade Daniel De Leon's articles for publication in his magazine, altho he had invited such articles, having advertised that 10 pages of his magazine were to be devoted to the discussion of Socialism by a Socialist of recognized standing.

MY IDEAL.

Let those who will,
 • Let those who can,
 Sing praises of
 The Superman.
 My simple song
 Will ever say,
 I love the man
 Of everyday:
 A man of noble
 Soul and heart,
 With unpretentious
 Glorious part;
 No boastful upstart
 Wins my soul,
 Nor God nor Jesus
 Is my goal;
 Give me the man
 Of everyday,
 Who slaves forever
 For his pay,
 But let him be
 A thinking one,
 Who has a goal
 That's to be won,
 And I will say:
 God's work is done.

FAINT CHORDS

REMINISCENCES.

My fancy roams to lands I left behind,
When still a boy I lived in joyous bliss;
And to the World's iniquities was blind,
As Jesus was to traiterous Judas' kiss.

Those were the days I knew nor war nor strife;
My only care, the schoolhouse and the play;
As smoothly as a sail swam on my life,
On placid waters, 'neath the heaven's ray.

So, I remember how each little blade
Upon the field, however it were plain,
Its joys into my boyish heart conveyed,
While glancing brightly with its drops of rain.

So, every little flower that I found,
However simple, joyously would yield
Its fragrance. There the daisies most abound,
Dotting with their white heads the picturesque field.

And with their fragrance garlands I would weave
And carefully would place them on my head;
Then in my fancy, my surroundings leave
And find myself in fairy lands instead.

But now, Ah, where's the joy of former days?
In memory alone, have they a nook.
Now, that I've trod the world's wormeaten ways,
In vain I search with anxious, yearning look,

For now I know the worries of a slave,
 Now can I hear the clang of unseen chains,
 Now clearer sounds the world's tumultuous rave,
 And I can feel, this strife our life-blood drains.

ONWARD WE GO.

As like a train, starting at some large town
 Of misery and strife, of hunger and despair,
 Diseases and foul air, and westward bound,
 Encounters on its way, first fairer life
 And purer air, then as it swiftly winds
 Its way thru mountains once impassable,
 Goes thru a better land, where life is green,
 And birds still sing in all their glory;
 And nature still holds sway, showing a beauteous aspect
 In wild scenery; and stops at last
 At some fair town, where life and nature coincide,
 Where everything seems fairer and more free,—
 So do our lives pass on thru time. First we
 Start out with ignorance upon our backs
 And are opprest; and misery and dark despair
 Find refuge in our hearts, and we are trod upon.
 Then as we learn by stern experience
 And as the light doth dawn upon us,
 And we see possibilities of better life,
 We sever our connections with the land of Greed,
 We pass the barriers considered once impassable.
 And onward march, passing thru fairer life
 Where joy begins to show its happy face,
 Until we reach the land of our desires
 Where Greed is buried and Freedom reigns supreme.

FAINT CHORDS

THE EMPTY CHAIR.

There stands an ancient, empty chair
Behind the open door;
My grandma used to sit in there—
But now she is no more.

No more her old and wrinkled face
Looks with a kindly smile;
'Tis quiet in the lonely place,
'Tis quiet all the while.

Ah, how we loved to sit beside
Her chair and hear her talk.
She sat all day; for she was frail
And scarcely could she walk.

She sat, and with a loving smile
Told tales of olden days;
She told them in her homely style;
Uncultured, tender ways.

But now she is forever gone,—
O, how we mourn the day
When grandma fell into a sleep
And slowly passed away.

Away, away, far, far away
Beneath the earthen sod;
With face so yellow and tightly drawn
Uplifted unto God.

She went away. Forever will
 Her spirit dwell with us;
 Forever will that empty chair
 Remind us of our loss.

THE CASTLE AND THE VALLEY.

A castle stood upon a hill.
 Impregnable; so solemn, still,
 Not e'en the rustle of a tree
 Broke in, however silently.
 And not a bird did care to sing,
 But slept with head beneath its wing,
 And oldish owls were sitting still,
 Staring, tho sightless, down the hill.

The valley underneath (so fair,
 Full of sweet flowers, balmy air,
 Of rivulets and skipping brooks
 All full of cheery, smiling looks,
 Bathing the rays of the happy sun
 As in the morning its journey begun.)

Looked up aloft with pleading air,
 Opened its arms, so warm and fair,
 Murmured these words to the castle drear
 Which gentle zephyr brought to its ear:
 "Come down to us; don't be so strange,
 Each passing year must bring a change.
 Why stand so gloomy, all alone?
 Be one of us, you heart of stone!"

FAINT CHORDS

WHAT THE MOON SAW.

Sadly looks the yellow moon

On this earth of ours;

Pityingly it travels on

Thru the evening hours.

Does it pierce the quiet sleep

That is now upon it,

Seeing sorrows wide and deep—

Grief and weeping on it?

Why should else the quiet moon

Glide along in sadness?

It can mirror but the gloom,

Where there's little gladness.

THE WANDERER.

Forlorn, I wandered thru the heavy mist;

A wanderer in search of Living Light;

And let my footsteps roam where'er they list;—

As like, in olden days, th' adventurous knight,

Who lost his way in forests sans a road,

Dropt reigns and let his stallion's instinct find

The nearest path to reach a night's abode.—

And so I let my weary footsteps wind;

Gazing before me with a tired eye;

Searching forever for the infinite goal;

Until at last, I looked upon the sky . . .

And there—as if a single glance it stole—

I saw a star; to her I fain would fly! . . .

Alas! She vanished, twinkling out her soul,

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

Your letter, Mack, is long to hand;
 Forgive my long procrastination
 In not replying. Understand,
 That I'm the product of a nation
 That loves delay. Like they I roam
 In halls of mere imagination,
 Forgetting in this occupation
 Friends from afar and those at home.
 But now, no more your patience trying,
 I in respectful imitation
 Of Pushkin, poet of that nation,
 That from misrule is ever crying,
 Send my reply, dear friend, to you.
 You speak of Solitude, and writing,
 You show your poet's heart so true;
 You write, as if you were reciting
 Some poem from the pen of Poe,
 Or from some noble Jewish writer.
 My Muse is listening, you invite her
 To wander 'midst the long ago;
 For know, dear Mack, that solitude
 For me just now has no attraction;
 Yes, once I loved to stupefaction
 To roam with friends forever mute,—
 Mute, do I say? O, no! They spoke
 A language that is ne'er forgotten,
 That longings in my heart awoke
 To change this world that's so besotten.
 But now, the noise of city life

FAINT CHORDS

Holds me in chains I cannot sever,
And it goes hard when I endeavor,
To run away from city strife.
And that is all. What else to tell?
Except that life goes on as ever:
The slave is dull, the master clever,
And Hunger cries, "'Tis I compel."

THE MAGICIAN.

He passes thru the city streets;
Wherever Poverty he meets,
Where Hope lies dying on the ground
Without a single sigh or sound.
Where smoking factory-prisons loom,
Where Hunger finds her tramping room,
And Misery, Despair, Travail,
Are following upon her trail.

And in his youthful, mighty hand
He holds a magic fairy-wand.
And lo! Its property is such,
That Happiness comes from its touch.

O, open wide your hovel's door
And let the youth stand on its floor!
He'll touch each wall with magic wand . . .
A palace in its place will stand!

Then Hope will lift her weary eyes
And from her deathbed will arise;
And at his magic touch, Distress
Will turn to joyous Happiness!

ON SEEING THE PICTURE "VISION ULTIME."

There stands the bloody, lying priest and clutches at
 his throat;
 His dagger reeks with human blood of martyrs that
 he smote.
 A vision stands before his eyes, that makes him shrink
 with fear,
 For this is what he sees before his very eyes appear:
 The naked truth was marching with unfettered limbs
 and hands;
 And Liberty, triumphant, spread its light o'er seas and
 lands;
 While Peace, majestic, stood and held the blind in its
 embrace,
 And pointed to the martyrs lying on a bloody place.

TO MY FRIEND.

My friend. The joy of life has left your face,
 And Melancholia sits in the vacant place;
 And clutches at the faded, smitten night—
 Who hopeless fell, into oblivion base—
 As if 'twere there, your hopes had taken flight . . .
 Not towards the coming new Messiah-Light.
 Ah, cast away your mantle of despair!
 Come, come with me! I'll lead you there,
 Where legions fight the battle of the day;
 Where, to the four points, Mars his sword doth bare,
 And Hope extends her hands as if to say:
 "Come, come to me! I'll drive Despair away!"

FAINT CHORDS

TO YOU.

A ship without a captain;
A runner who is lame;
Is the man without an object,
Without a higher aim.

'Tis sin to be despondent!
Come comrade, be a man!
The future lies before you,
The goal within life's span!

'Tis laggards, cowards slumber
And vegetate in peace,
But men forever struggle
To compensate life's lease.

And every step you've taken
O'er mountain, rock or stile,
Makes you a better being
And makes your life worth while.

LINCOLN.

Like bells, that chime a vesper tune,
His name sounds to each listening ear;
His life elipt short, while yet in June,
Brought to a nation many a tear.
His noble face to memory clings,
His noble deeds are never mute;
Tho he is gone, his name still rings
With all a people's gratitude.

MY SORROW.

O, if you would know my sorrow;
 O, my God, where can I borrow
 In a language, seeming narrow,
 Words enough to tell my woe.
 Words enough to tell my woe,
 So that you alone should know.
 How my very soul they harrow,
 Draining all the sap and marrow;
 Piercing, piercing like an arrow
 To the very inner glow,—
 To the very inner glow,
 Where the spark of life is low.
 Like a mighty wind dispelling;
 Irresistible, compelling,
 Blowing, blowing from its dwelling
 All the gladness that was there.
 All the gladness that was there,
 Blowing, blowing out for'er.
 And I wish my hour were knelling,
 Mighty Death begin her shelling;
 Shelling, shelling at my dwelling,
 For my heart is in despair;
 For my heart is in despair,
 Since my love is gone for'er.

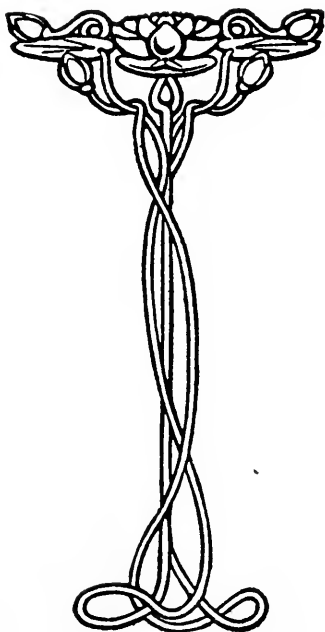
FAINT CHORDS

BROOKLYN BRIDGE.

Viewed from afar,
The Brooklyn Bridge
Looks like a string
Of sparkling beads. . . .
As, arched across
The waters dark,
(Save where they mirror
Light subdued)
From shore to shore
It shines at eve.
Each little bead
Tries to outshine
The glances bright
Of brother-beads;
Each envious of
The other's flare,
As thru the mist
They brightly glare.
So sees the toiler,
Coming home
Across the river
From his work.
In every glance
Of their wild eyes,
He sees their strife;
He sees their woe;
Their triumph sees;
And their despair.
And every gleaming

FAINT CHORDS

Little light
That pierces thru
The mournful air,
Seems like his own
Wild, slumb'ring soul
That yearns to pierce.
To break the dark.



FAINT CHORDS

IN A CEMETERY.

I stood beside a cemetery green
And gazed upon its well-kept, winding walks;
Upon its tombs and monuments and graves,
Upon its lawns and flowers and benches green—
And thoughts were wandering deep in my soul;
Thoughts of the dead that slept there peacefully,
Caring not for the world and its turmoil,
For all its teeming, trifling, towering towns,
For all its noise and splendor and its crime.
For all its misery and dark despair,
And all its fight for petty, prowling pelf.
There they all lay in slumber sound, serene,
Beneath the sod, unseeing and unseen.

I entered, for my heart was sad and sere,
And longed for silence and thought-breeding air;
I looked upon the graves and tombs so white
And monuments that lined the quiet way.
I read monotonous inscriptions, dates
And epitaphs and sacred Bible verse,
And the contagious cemetery air
Pressed on my troubled, yearning, crying heart.
And I, some day, will lie with you, O dead!
There, 'neath the soil, in never-ending sleep,
Far and forgotten by the lurid world.
Mayhap my last abode will also bend
With grass and flowers planted by some friend.

But what is this? There, where the graves lie thick,
 Huddling together in their poverty,—
 Side by side, there stands a carriage black,
 And weeping men and women all around
 A new-dug grave, wherein a coffin black
 Is lowered in a slow and measured way.
 Rejoice, ye dead; ye silent symbols of
 Our fate! Another one has journeyed on
 To join your happy company. Dance, dance,
 Ye ghosts! Join hands, ye corpses, dance! Fast, fast
 Your ranks are swelling 'neath the dismal earth.
 Weep not, ye fools; weep not, ye women; men,
 Weep not! 'Tis but another urn for wrong
 Has gone to join the happy buried throng.

O, happy, happy corpse, no more thy back
 Will bend beneath a heavy, leaden load.
 No more will dire Oppression wring thy heart,
 And chains will never, never clank forlorn
 Upon thy aching hands. Thou wilt not see
 Cruel Hunger tramp the dirty, teeming streets;
 Thou wilt not gaze on helpless infancy
 Slaughtered upon the altar of vile Greed;
 Thou wilt not pine for forests and for fields,
 Nor mountains, nor the healthy air and sport;
 Nor wilt remain unanswered by the world.
 And ne'er will Disappointment's deadly sting
 Thy heart with never ending anguish wring.

WRUNG FROM ABOVE.

. . . . yearning like a God in pain

KEATS.

Have I not sent the sun to spread the light?
Have I not sent the moon and stars at night?
Then why such darkness all the world pervades,
And grief and sorrow cast their gloomy shades?

Have I not spoken from the Holy Mount?
Have I not gushed from rock, a saving fount?
Have I not dropped as manna from the sky?
Then tell me, tell me, why such misery?

FROM THE RUSSIAN OF PLESHEEV.

Why have you hung your head, O, you green willow tree?
Sighing so sadly and low?
Seems you are grieving with me in your sympathy,
As if my sorrow you know.

Your silvery leaves with the clear wave are whispering.
What are the secrets I hear?
Is it about me, in tones so mysterious,
You're murmuring into its ear?

Seems that my dismal thought, painful and sorrowful,
From you I could not disguise;
You have divined in some manner mysterious
Why these tears flowed from my eyes.

And in your whisper I hear all your sympathy,
Listening, happy I feel;—
Seems but to Nature, the power is given,
Invisible suff'ring to heal.

FAINT CHORDS

MY GARDEN.

From the Russian of Plesheev.

O, how fresh and green my garden!
There, their way, the lilacs made,
From the bird-cherry so fragrant
And the leafy linden's shade.

True, there are no pale-white lilies,
Nor geraniums proud and fair;
Only variegated poppies
Lift their heads up in the air.

And a sun flow'r at the entrance
Like a trusty watchman true,
Guards the winding little pathway,
Where the grass unhampered grew.

But I love my modest garden,
It is dearer to my heart
Than the cities' gloomy gardens,
With their shades of alleys smart.

And all day I'd love to listen,
In the tall grass, 'neath the trees,
To the buzzing 'round the blossoms
Of the thoughtful, busy bees.

A FLOWER.

From the Russian of Pushkin.

A flower, odorless and withered,
 Forgotten in a book I see;
 Into my soul strange fancies gathered
 And musings filled me instantly.

Where did it bloom, that flower sere?
 How long? Which Spring and in what land?
 Who tore it off, and why laid here?
 Plucked by a known or stranger's hand?

As a reminder of a meeting
 Or destined parting in the glades?
 A lonely walk, a tender greeting
 In silent paths, 'midst forest shades?

Is he alive and is she living?
 And where is now their little nook?
 Or have they also faded, grieving,
 Like this dead flower in the book?

FAINT CHORDS

"THE CLOUDS."

From the Russian of Plesheev.

At the clouds, as they swam in the skies,
I gazed long, as I lay 'neath a tree;
And the wind thru the maple-leaves sighs,
While a-bending them slightly to me.

And above me the clouds raced ahead,
Disappearing and melting away;
O'er the sun they would jealously spread,
Oft depriving the earth of its ray.

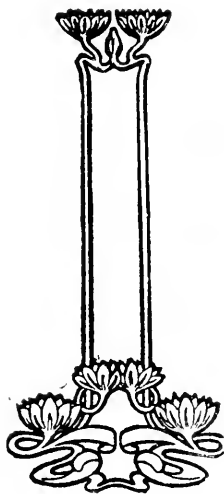
Seemed as if to the sun they would say,
"Send no rays to the earth from above;
Cease, O cease, sun, we fervently pray,
Still to gladden the earth with your love;

Where so thick lies the mist all along,
Where your fiery beam had expired,
So much evil is done, so much wrong,
Many dark deeds and crimes have transpired.

Is it worthy of your sweet caress?
Does the sinful one love you, we pray?
Us alone with your smile you must bless,
Us, the pure ones, embrace with your ray."

Swept the clouds o'er the limitless plain,
One by one disappearing on high,
But it seemed that they pleaded in vain,
For the sun paid no heed to their cry.

And their purity passionless, gray,
 'Twould not take in exchange for the earth ;
And again with its passionate ray,
 Hugged the sinful, the wrong-doing earth.



FAINT CHORDS

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

From the Russian of Plesheev.

After storms and after thunder,
 After dark and dreary days,
 Sunlight tore the clouds asunder,
 Brought me gladness on its rays.

But for long? . . . Upon the morrow
 New clouds float upon their way . . .
 Sunshine, clouds and joy and sorrow,
 Near each other seem to stay!

THE CUP OF LIFE.

From the Russian of Lermontov.

With covered eyes we ever drink
 Out of the Cup of Being;
 And with our tears its golden brink
 We wet, with eyes unseeing;

But when the cover from our eyes,
 (Before the hour of dying)
 Falls off 'midst disappointed sighs,
 Our dreams unsatisfying,—

Then only, do we see, it seems,
 How empty were its lures;
 And that its contents were our dreams,—
 And that it was not ours.



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